



Problem Solving

The management of an association is not an easy task. This is true regardless of the size of the association, number of centers serviced, or any other variable. The fact is, every association is unique, and thus faces a unique set of challenges.

Those associations that are most successful in resolving problems tend to be organized, have written procedures and, most importantly, use the tools that have been provided to them.

Problems/Questions Relating to USBC Operations

Individuals that operate state and local associations are not expected to face challenges alone. A myriad of tools are available to assist in solving problems, as well as answer questions associations may have.

Based on the type of question or problem, associations should refer to the [Association Resource Center \(ARC\)](#) on BOWL.com.

Some of the tools available are:

1. ***USBC Association Policy Manual.*** The *USBC Association Policy Manual* is a reference document which details the governance and structure of USBC associations. The information in this document provides a guide to the requirements for all associations, plus information on how to run the association to meet those requirements. Topics covered include USBC policies, removal and suspension procedures, center certification requirements, SMART program, duties of specific board positions, and many questions relating to the operation of an association (i.e., elections, taxes, programs, audits, etc.). There are Commonly Asked Questions (CAQ's) throughout the document answering many of the questions that come up during the regular course of association operations.
2. **Association's Operations Manual.** A template for developing an association's operations manual is available on the "[Manuals](#)" page of the Association Resource Center (ARC) on BOWL.com. Once completed, this manual is maintained by the state/local association board. The association's operations manual outlines association policies, procedures, and day-to-day operations. The operations manual should spell out how things are done within the association so that someone new could come in and read the manual and know how to perform a specific task. (Remember: there is no need to duplicate information from the *USBC Association Policy Manual* in your local/state operations manual.)
 - a. As the association experiences a challenging situation or problem, the association may want to consider adding a policy or procedure to the association's operations manual, so it can be easily resolved if the matter arises in the future.
 - b. The association's operations manual may outline items such as: committee responsibilities, how the association championship site is chosen, the association manager salary (if any), and/or delegate reimbursement information (if any).
3. **Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised.** This book governs all meetings when a meeting procedure is not addressed in the association's Bylaws or in the *USBC*



Association Policy Manual. To curtail problems from occurring at meetings, there are a few actions the association can take:

- a. **First**, become familiar with the meeting procedures in the association bylaws and *USBC Association Policy Manual*. Having this background will allow meetings to proceed smoothly as questions can be resolved quickly by informed members.
 - b. **Second**, a copy of the association's bylaws, the *USBC Association Policy Manual*, as well as *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, should be brought to every meeting in case they need to be referenced.
4. **USBC Tournament Managers Manual**. Tournament managers can use this resource to find information regarding tournament related items. Also included are sample tournament rules, prize distribution information, and sample forms/letters related to tournament operations. This manual is available on the "[Manuals](#)" page of the Association Resource Center (ARC) on BOWL.com.
 5. **USBC League Operations Handbook**. The *USBC League Operations Handbook* deals specifically with topics related to the operation of a successful league – from the league organizational meeting, to the prize disbursement. The manual is designed for use by the league president and secretary and includes many tools that will be used in relation to his/her position. This manual is available on the "[Manuals](#)" page of the Association Resource Center (ARC) on BOWL.com.
 6. **USBC Playing Rules and Commonly Asked Questions**. The USBC Playing Rules represent the framework for all USBC certified league and tournament competition. The rule book is the primary reference point for anything related to the rules of the game, league operations, and tournament operations. It also provides a comprehensive list of commonly asked questions in relation to these topics. This manual is included with an association's yearly supplies and is available on the "[Rules](#)" page of BOWL.com.
 7. **USBC Local Association Center Inspection Manual**. The purpose of this manual is to provide general guidance and instruction on the duties and responsibilities of the local Association Manager and inspection team and should be used as a reference tool. It is available on the "[Lane Inspection & Certification](#)" page of the Association Resource Center (ARC) on BOWL.com.
 8. **USBC Equipment Specifications Manual**. Information regarding the technical specifications of specific equipment, as well as lane dressing information, can be found in this manual. It is available on the "[Equipment Specifications](#)" page of BOWL.com under Forms, Manuals and Bulletins.
 9. **BOWL.com**. USBC's Website, BOWL.com, has an array of information that is useful for associations. From the association perspective the most relevant section will be the [Association Resource Center \(ARC\)](#).
 10. The Association Resource Center (ARC) has links to many pieces of information that an association may need as well as links to educational documents and videos to help your association. It is broken down by sections to make the information easier to find.



11. **Educational Opportunities.** Numerous educational opportunities exist for association leaders, including webinars and various workshops and seminars. To learn about the different educational opportunities offered by USBC Headquarters, contact your Regional Manager. Contact information is available on the "[Associations](#)" page of BOWL.com.

Problem Solving by the Association

State and local associations are an extension of USBC and expected to operate within the guidelines established by law, the delegates, and the national organization. Associations are organized in such a way, however, that each has a great deal of autonomy in their operations and decision making and should operate with a high level of independence.

A wide variety of issues/problems can arise in an association. Association leaders are expected to work toward resolving these matters. The following are a number of problem-solving considerations and strategies that may be useful for helping association leaders work toward an understanding/resolution of an issue or problem.

Identifying the Root of a Problem

Too often, a symptom of a problem is mistakenly perceived as being the actual problem. Many times, the true root of a problem can only be found by going below the surface and asking "why."

Take for example an association board that is debating a \$300 purchase of additional filing cabinets:

Q: Why do we need additional filing cabinets?

A: We have more papers/applications/business correspondence than room for filing.

Q: Why do we have to keep all these documents in hard form?

A: We do not. We could also keep them electronically.

By going beyond the surface in this case, it is discovered that the actual root of the problem is not that more filing cabinets are needed. Rather, the problem is that there is too much paper.

Because of this exercise, the association purchased a scanner for \$150 and decided that documents

beyond five years old would be kept electronically. Thus, the association solved the root of the problem and saved money in the process.

Generating Solutions

In working to solve a problem, it is important that association leaders realize that rarely is there only one solution. Consider using one of the following strategies in seeking a variety of potential solutions:

- **Negotiation.** Negotiation is a give and take process between two or more parties (each with their own aims, needs and viewpoints) seeking to discover a common ground and reach an agreement to settle a matter of mutual concern or resolve a conflict. Association leaders may find themselves in a negotiating situation in a variety of contexts, including business related matters such as purchasing awards, or association related matters, such



as working toward a merger or developing a reciprocal agreement with another association.

Especially when negotiating with other associations, an association should strive for win-win negotiating. In win-win negotiating, each party involved gains as a result of the negotiation. This does not necessarily mean that each party gets everything they desired when the process began. Rather, it means that an agreement is reached in which both parties are better off than prior to the agreement.

Win-win negotiating allows for the best possibility of resolving all issues at hand, while still maintaining relationships with the other negotiating parties.

- **Involving the Membership in Decision Making.** Decisions regarding the management and governance of the association are made by the association's board of directors. Members' interests are represented in decision making because board members are elected by the members.

This is not to say, however, that the board may not take a decision to the membership. While the board is under no obligation to do so unless mandated by law or the bylaws, allowing the association membership to decide, or have input on a matter, may be a good approach if the board has a good deal of division on an issue, or if the decision has a significant impact on the membership.

Take for example a situation in which the board cannot reach a decision on what format (doubles, team, etc.) to use for the association's championship tournament. Because the board is undecided, and the decision has a direct impact on the membership, the board may decide that the best resolution is to let the members make the decision.

Conflict Management

Understanding Conflict. Misconceptions about conflict abound. One of the most common misconceptions regarding conflict is that all conflict is negative. In reality, conflict is not inherently good or bad. Rather, it is an inevitable part of any organization.

Any conflict is ultimately defined on the effects it has on an organization. Some conflict can lead to positive changes in the organization. Other conflict produces only negative results (Ivancevich, J., and Matteson, M. 2002. *Organizational Behavior and Management*).

Associations should realize, however, that if certain considerations are observed when conflict arises, the conflict may be steered toward having a positive effect. While impossible in every case, conflict can be managed in such a way that the probability of a conflict leading to a positive change is increased.

Managing Conflict. Before conflict management can be attempted between any individuals or groups, there must first be a willingness on the part of each party to attempt resolution. Without this willingness, any attempt to manage and ultimately resolve the conflict is destined to fail.



In order to increase the chances that a conflict may have a positive result, an association should incorporate the following strategies:

1. Develop guidelines that allow the conflict to be addressed.
 - a. In a neutral, comfortable environment, in which all parties can meet face to face.
 - b. At a predetermined meeting time, so parties may be prepared for the meeting with information they wish to bring forward.
 - c. In a situation in which ground rules are established at the beginning of the meeting and enforced throughout. Ground rules could forbid interrupting, personal attacks, and maintaining a professional nature. It is a good practice to use a moderator, or third-party individual to chair the meeting.
2. Identify the root problem, and work to generate solutions:
 - a. Focus on the problem itself, not the people involved.
 - b. Come to some agreement as to what the problem is before developing solutions.
 - c. Incorporate solution generating strategies, and explore multiple possible solutions, if necessary.
 - d. Focus only on solutions that solve the root of the conflict or problem, not those that only address its symptoms.
3. Agree on a Plan of Action for the implementation of a solution. The Plan of Action should clearly identify:
 - a. What the solution is.
 - b. Who is responsible for carrying out each part of the Plan of Action?
 - c. The time frame in which the Plan of Action will be carried out.
4. Follow up on the success of the solution at a predetermined time.

Should an association find that certain variations of the above strategies produce greater results; these variations may certainly be used. Successful conflict management takes modification, as each situation is comprised of a unique set of circumstances.

Regrettably, not every conflict that arises in a situation will lead to positive changes. The goal of any association should be to minimize dysfunctional conflicts.